

Message Text

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FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7014

INFO AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 4962

EXDIS

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TAGS: PFOR TW CH

SUBJ: PEKING KEEPS SILENT RE PRESIDENT' S REFERENCE TO
TAIWAN AS " NATION"

REF: TAIPEI 2786

SUMMARY: PRC SILENCE SO FAR ABOUT THE PRESIDENT' S REFERENCE
TO TAIWAN AS A " NATION" PROBABLY REFLECTS PEKING' S EMINENT SATIS-
FACTION WITH THE PRESIDENT' S OVERALL TREATMENT OF THE STATUS OF
TAIWAN IN HIS RECENT FOREIGN POLICY REPORT. ALSO, PEKING WOULD
BE MOST RELUCTANT TO SPOIL THE HARMONY BETWEEN US, OR, IN CONTRA-
VENTION OF RECENT PRACTICE, TO SEEM TO CRITICIZE THE PRESIDENT.
HOWEVER, PEKING MUST BE SOMEWHAT DISTURBED TO SEE PEOPLE IN
TAIPEI INTERPRETING THE TERM " NATION" AS THE REFLECTION OF A
" ONE- CHINA, ONE- TAIWAN" RATIONALE. SO PEKING MAY POSSIBLY
SEEK AN OPPORTUNITY TACTFULLY AND PRIVATELY TO SUGGEST THAT WE CALL
TAIWAN SOMETHING OTHER THAN " NATION". END SUMMARY

1. THE PRESIDENT' S FOREIGN POLICY REPORT (PORTION HEADED
" ASIA: AREA OF CHANGE") CONTAINED A REFERENCE TO TAIWAN AS A
" NATION". SOME OBSERVERS IN TAIWAN HAVE PROFESSED TO SEE IN
THIS A REFLECTION OF A " ONE- CHINA, ONE- TAIWAN" RATIONALE(REFTEL).
SO FAR, AT LEAST IN PUBLIE, THE PRC HAS NOT SAID ANYTHING, EVEN
THOUGH (SINCE REFTEL IS UNCLASSIFIED) PEKING MUST BE AWARE OF THE
INTERPRETATION THAT IS BEING PUT ON THE PRESIDENT' S USE OF THE WORD
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" NATION", AND MUST PERCEIVE AT LEAST SOME SLIGHT RISK THAT ITS CONTINUED SILENCE MIGHT BE TAKEN AS A SIGN OF CONSENT.

2. WERE IT NOT FOR THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE TAIWAN COMMENTARY REPORTED IN REFTEL, PEKING WOULD HAVE AMPLE REASON TO IGNORE THE PRESIDENT' S REFERENCE TO THE " NATION" OF TAIWAN. SATISFACTION WITH THE PRESIDENT' S TREATMENT OF THE STATUS OF TAIWAN (IN THE PORTION HEADED " JOURNEY TO PEKING") WAS EVIDENCED LOCALLY IN THE USE BY HONG KONG' S COMMUNIST PAPERS OF THE USIS- DISTRIBUTED CHINA SECTION OF THE PRESIDENT' S REPORT. USIS TRANSLATION OF THE PARAGRAPH BEGINNING " WITH RESPECT TO THE RELATIONSHIP OF TAIWAN TO THE MAINLAND..." WAS EVEN SINGLED OUT FOR SPECIAL PRAISE IN A COMMENT COLUMN. THE PRESIDENT' S REAFFIRMATION OF THE UNITED STATES RECOGNITION THAT TAIWAN IS A PROVINCE OF CHINA (AS PEKING PRESUMABLY READS IT) WOULD ADEQUATELY COUNTERBALANCE HIS REFERENCE ELSEWHERE TO THE RETENTION OF DIPLOMATIC TIES, THE DEFENSE TREATY, AND ECONOMIC CONTACTS WITH TAIWAN.

3. ADDITIONAL REASONS EXIST WHY PEKING WOULD PROBABLY LIKE TO TREAT THE PRESIDENT' S REFERENCE TO THE " NATION" OF TAIWAN AS AN INSIGNIFICANT SLIP OF THE TONGUE. PEKING HAS, SINCE THE PRESIDENT' S VISIT, AVOIDED PERSONAL CRITICISM OF HIM. WITH THE LIAISON OFFICES JUST BEING INSTALLED, OUR RELATIONS ARE IN A DELICATE TRANSITIONAL PHASE WHICH PEKING WOULD BE RELUCTANT TO DISTURB. ALSO, SINCE FEBRUARY 28 PEKING HAS HAD IN HIGH GEAR ITS PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN TO PROMOTE SENTIMENT ON TAIWAN FOR REVERSION; ONE KEY WEAPON IN THE CAMPAIGN HAS BEEN THE PICTURE OF US- PRC HARMONY ON THE STATUS OF TAIWAN, AND THIS PICTURE HAS BEEN WIDELY TOUTED BEFORE THE DOMESTIC AUDIENCE AS WELL AS THAT ON TAIWAN. PEKING WOULD CERTAINLY BE MOST RELUCTANT TO CALL UNNECESSARY ATTENTION TO ANYTHING WHICH MIGHT SPOIL THE PICTURE.

4. I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER IT WILL OCCUR TO PEKING TO SUSPECT THAT THE MAY 14 LIEN HO PAO EDITORIAL, OR THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PRESIDENT' S REMARKS SUGGESTED THEREIN, REPRESENTED A DELIBERATE ATTEMPT BY THE GRC TO PROVOKE A PRC REJOINDER WHICH WOULD SOW DISCORD BETWEEN PEKING AND WASHINGTON. IF THIS SUSPECTION DOES OCCUR TO THE CHINESE IN PEKING, THEY ARE ALL THE MORE LIKELY TO REFRAIN FROM PUBLIC REACTION.

5. ON BALANCE, I WOULD EXPECT PEKING TO CONTINUE STUDIOUSLY CONFIDENTIAL

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TO IGNORE IN ITS PUBLIC OUTPUT, AT LEAST, THE PRESIDENT' S REFERENCE TO THE " NATION" OF TAIWAN. AT SOME APPROPRIATE TIME, AND IN AN APPROPRIATE PRIVATE CONTEXT, HOWEVER, PEKING WILL PROBABLY TRY TO COMMUNICATE TO WASHINGTON ITS DESIRE THAT IN FUTURE TAIWAN BE CALLED SOMETHING OTHER THAN A " NATION". MUCH AS THE PRC VALUES ITS NEW RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US FOR ECONOMIC, DIPLOMATIC, POLITICAL, AND STRATEGIC REASONS, AND

MUCH AS IT WOULD REGRET HAVING TO INTRODUCE A SOUR NOTE INTO
THE HARMONY, IT WOULD (I THINK) BE UNEASY ABOUT APPEARING TO
ACQUIESCE IN US TREATMENT OF TAIWAN AS A " NATION".
OSBORN

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